4: Cummins D-4 (no date) 1937 MD1 Syria MD1

DERMATOGLYPHICS IN PEOPLES OF THE NEAR EAST

I. LEBANESE: MITWALI

HAROLD CUMMINS AND W. M. SHANKLIN
Tulane University and American University of Beirut, Syria

121 This report is presented as a record of data toward an eventual analysis of racial variation in dermatoglyphics. It is to be hoped that a broad comparison of races on this basis may be eventually possible, but it will be necessary to continue the accumulation of records on various populations, perhaps from time to time taking stock of progress as has been done recently by Steggerda, Steggerda and Lane for the palmar features (Middle American Research Series, publication 7, Tulane University, '36).

124 101 795 The material here treated represents a population not hitherto investigated from the standpoint of dermatoglyphics. The Mitwali are a Syrian mountain people, living in the southern Lebanon range. They are Moslems, but adhere to the Shiite sect rather than to the Sunni which is common to the region. There are 138 subjects in the series, males and females being in the proportion of about two to one; in view of the small numbers the sexes are combined. The subjects are mainly children in the government schools, the adult population having proved generally unsuitable for printing—on account of extensive callouses.

141 128 The palmar features, main lines and patterns, are tabulated in tables 1 and 2, their formulations following the methods of Cummins et al. (Am. J. Phys. Anthrop., XII, '29).

The data on lines A and D have been further analyzed, to determine the main-line index which has been suggested by Cummins (Middle American Research Series, Tulane University, publication 7, '36) as a value denoting the degree of slant of the general palmar configuration. For the 276 hands

AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY, VOL. XXII, NO. 2
JANUARY–MARCH, 1937

III The Shashans

The Shashans, a Circassian tribe around Ras el Ain, complete the rural population of Jazirah. They migrated to Syria during the Ottoman rule and settled as mercenary soldiers. They are not good at agriculture and their lands are not fertile and do not compare with those of the Kurds.

IV. The Christians

The cities and commercial centers of Jazirah are an extra-ordinary mixture of races and creeds, but they are perhaps more than 80% Christian. This is true of Kubur el Bid, Qamishli, Amunda, Dirbassiya and Hassakeh.

As in the case of the Kurds, the Turkish massacres of the Christians in Mardin and the mountainous country around it started their migration to Jazirah. The Christians reached Jazirah without property or capital with which to begin. They settled mostly in the towns mentioned. A few of them already owned lands, others were traders and had previous relations with the Bedouins and Kurdish tribes. In a relatively short time the towns grew and flourished. The Christinas prospered from commerce before the expansion of agriculture. The tariff differences between Syria and Turkey on such important commodities as sugar, tea, and coffee and the intermingling of the Kurdish population on both sides of the frontier, made the Jazirah towns ideal for an extensive smuggling business.

The town Christians also served as middlemen to the merchants of Aleppo, who provided the money to lend to the Bedouins and Kurds or to buy the sheep, cattle and crops. This work on a commission or partnership basis coupled with the smuggling business proved profitable to the merchants of Jazirah, so that during the last twenty years many of them have become wealthy and have come to own real estate and agricultural lands and machinery without, however, abandoning their commercial activities with the merchants of Aleppo. In fact, the general prosperity and development of Jazirah has increased its need for the credit of Aleppo.

This picture of the Christian population of Jazirah is not complete without mention of the Christian peasants who migrated from the mountain villages and settled in the country. Though Christian and living in villages 100% Christian, some of them are Kurdish in their language, dress and customs. Some other villages are populated

by Syriac Christians who speak Syriac and Arabic. A few villages are completely Armenian. Most of these villages are around Kubur el Bid and Qamishli. These Christian peasants are very devout. They are also conservative and always remember the injuries inflicted upon them in Turkey. There is hardly a Christian family in the towns or villages which did not lose a relative or a friend in the massacres. Therefore they are always on their guard against their Moslem neighbors and are always suspicious of the Government. Their bitterness is not likely to disappear for some time to come, and is a factor to be considered in the political development of Jazirah.

The Christians of Jazirah belong to all creeds and denominations. The largest community in numbers and in importance is the Syriac Orthodox, followed by the Armanian Orthodox. There are Chaldeans, Syriac Catholics, Armanian Catholics, Protestants, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Nestorians. It should be mentioned that what determines the origin and affiliation of a man in Jazirah is not his language or dress, but his Church. Thus a Kurd who speaks only the Kurdish language, who lives like a Kurd on the same standard of living, and who dresses like one, is yet an Armenian or a Chaldean or a Jacobite because he belongs to one of these Churches. His original language and customs have been lost by living for ages in a foreign environment. That is why one finds in Jazirah and the mountains beyond it the only Christian Kurds in the world. But in reality they are not Kurds. They are Armenians or Syriacs or Chaldeans who have adopted the Kurdish language and their true nationality can be known only by referring to their Churches.

A more recent concentration of Christians in Jazirah is constituted by the Assyrians around Tal Tamr on the Khabur. Following the massacre of the Assyrians in Iraq in 1933 and their expulsion from that country, the French in Syria gave them asylum, and the League of Nations appropriated funds to settle them along the Khabur. Lands were granted to them and villages were built in which motors and pumps were installed for irrigation. Nevertheless during these 19 years all the efforts appear to have been useless. The ten thousand Assyrians who migrated to Syria lead a wretched life. Their motors are not in a working condition, their crops are not abundant and they are now trying to sell their lands. The reasons for such a condition may be found in the fact that the Assyrians are not farmers and the lands given to them are of a poor quality.

During the French Mandate, the Christians of Jazirah, with the memory of the Turkish massacres still fresh, and considering all

7:Lewis S-5 (ca. 1940-45) 1948 MDI Syria MDI

Tamerlane's invasion and were dispersed in other parts of Syria. Of 3200 villages once on the tax rolls of the pashalik of Aleppo, only 400 were said to be inhabited when Volney visited the country in the 1780's.[28] Such peasants as remained in the west of our region suffered from misgovernment, extortion, and raiding by Arab tribes.

In the second half of the past century a movement of recolonization started that is still in progress. Sheep-raising Arab tribes began to settle in villages; peasants came from the districts of Hama and Homs; immigrant Circassians established four villages north of the town of Selemiya. The frontier began to move outward once more, and old foggaras were cleaned and repaired to give irrigation water once again. The strongest and most energetic immigrant group, the pioneers, were Ismaili, led back to their land of a thousand years ago by a group of powerful leaders. They settled first on the site of Selemiya itself about 1870. Today they number 14,000 or more, the majority living in the town and in villages to the east. They chose village sites where old foggaras could be brought into use, and for 75 years they have been extending the area of irrigated land by the restoration of old canals and the digging of new ones. In the last 20 years subsistence agriculture, depending largely on unirrigated grain farming, has given way before a more intensive commercial system, typified by the growing of irrigated cash crops such as seed onions and cotton on individualized holdings. The government has granted money for canal cleaning and swamp drainage. All these factors have contributed to extension of irrigation.

Some old canals, however, are still derelict. Some are so ruined that the cost of repair would be prohibitive. Others may yet be brought back into use, but the will to work is weaker than in the early days of colonization, and now laborers' wages and other expenses have increased. Elsewhere village boundaries cut across old canals. Landowners of the village where a canal rises are loath to let the water flow away to the lands of another village, and thus ancient foggara systems which were perfectly related to the physical environment have been partly replaced by more local schemes of surface canal and ditch irrigation. For example, the canals that rise in Moufaqqar (Fig. 3) could irrigate land and drive mills in Moufaqqar, Tell et Tout, and Selemiya, but they have been so modified that the water is used only in Moufaqqar, and some of it runs to waste. A canal which rises in Tell et Tout but which formerly flowed on to Selemiya land has been blocked, so that its water irrigates Tell et Tout land only.

[28] C.-F. Volney: Travels through Egypt and Syria, in the Years 1783, 1784 & 1785, translated from the French, 2 vols., New York, 1798; reference in Vol. 2, pp. 90-91.

9: Hitti 3-5 (ca. 1926) 1928 MD1 Syria MD1
Druze MD6

[p. 1]

CHAPTER I

A UNIQUE AND SECRET SECT

S
D
795
101
175

Two Historical Fossils:—The Druzes of Syria and the Samaritans of Palestine are two unique communities not to be found elsewhere in the whole world. Like social fossils in an alien environment, these two peoples have survived for hundreds of years in that land rightly described as a "Babel of tongues" and a "museum of nationalities."

The Samaritans are the remnants of the tribes from Assyria and Persia who were transplanted by Sargon some seven hundred years before Christ to take the place of the "ten tribes" who were carried into captivity.[1] They figured in the life of Christ as is illustrated by the case of the "Samaritan woman" and the story of the "good Samaritan." Today they are represented by about one hundred and eighty persons who intermarry among themselves and are becoming rapidly extinct. Their habitat is modern Nāblus (biblical Shechem), and their religion is ancient Judaism mixed with pagan survivals.

D
174

The Druzes have no such clear record to show regarding their origin as a people and as a sect. Their ethnographical origins, no less than their ritual practices and religious beliefs, are shrouded in mystery. Appearing for the first time on the pages of history at Wādi-al-Taym near Mt. Hermon in anti-Lebanon, as professors of the divinity of the sixth Fāṭimite Caliph in Cairo (996–1020 A.D.), the Druzes have lived their semi-independent lives secluded in their mountain fastnesses of Lebanon, unmindful of the progress of the world around them, and almost entirely forgotten by the outside world.

---

[1] *Cf.* James A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans, the Earliest Jewish Sect* (Philadelphia, 1907), pp. 46–57.

9: Hitti 8-5 (ca. 1926) 1928 MD1 Syria MD1
Druze MD8

3 D 795 101

Other Secret Sects:—The Druze people constitute one of the two leading secret sects found only in Syria, the other being the Nuṣayriyyah inhabiting the mountains north of Tripoli. The Ismā'iliyyah of the Ḥimṣ and Ḥamāh district, another secret sect, are descended from the Assassins,[1] who for two centuries or so struck awe and terror into the hearts of the Crusaders, and are represented today by a few other sectarians in Persia and India. The Yezidis, so-called devil worshipers, practice their hidden rites in the out-of-the-way hills between Antioch and Aleppo and have coreligionists in Kurdistān and Armenia.

S D 795 121

Special Interest of this Study:—But of all these sects Druzism is perhaps the most interesting and important. It is still a living force. Its followers form to the present day a vigorous and flourishing community in the Lebanon. Its learned system has not changed since it was first inaugurated in the early part of the eleventh century. The Islam of the Near East has changed and adapted itself to the requirements of the varying conditions. The Christianity of the Near East has changed. But the Druze system has been and still is the same.

S D 177 875

The modernizing influence has in late years brought within its sphere quite a large number of the young and uninitiated Druzes. The report of the American University of Beirūt for last year indicates that there are in that institution alone thirty-six Druze students and five Druze teachers. But no one with first-hand knowledge of the situation would go so far as even to recognize the existence of a "modernist movement" alleged to be aiming at divulging the Druze beliefs, much less to declare "It is understood that Dr. Bliss of Beirūt will be the probable intermediary of communication with the western world if this disclosure takes place."[2]

S D 795

In fact the outside world knows so little about the contents of this religion that in a recent session of the Permanent Mandates

---

[1] Arabic *Ḥashshāshīn* — those addicted to the use of a stupefying weed.

[2] De Lacy O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate* (London, 1923), p. 244. Dr. Bliss died in 1920.

9. Hitti S-5 (ca. 1926) 1928 MD1 Syria MD1
Druze MD8

Commission of the League of Nations the question was raised as to whether there was anything in the Druze teachings that was inimical to organized government and to state authority.

A study of Druzism is especially valuable and interesting not only because its adherents, unlike the adherents of the other sects, have shown remarkable vitality and thrust themselves repeatedly upon the attention of the world—as in the case of the current events in Syria—but because of its historic connection with Christianity and Oriental Christian sects. In its rise and development from Moslem soil, Druzism held close relationship to Christianity and became heir to a number of Zoroastrian and Judaeo-Christian sects, as well as to a body of Hellenistic and Persian philosophies. Many of those sects and schools of thought have since disappeared, but Druzism is still with us; and, through its medium, their ideas have survived to the present day. The religious and philosophical concepts of many Shī'ite Moslem, and a few semi-Christian, sects have been preserved to us through Druzism, though the original sects and their votaries have long become extinct.

As we shall, therefore, in the following pages analyze and investigate the apparently strange dogmas and tenets of Druze belief, we shall find in addition to Neo-Platonic and Manichaean influences, marked traces of Jewish and Christian influences which have trickled thereto through Moslem strata. The basic fundamentals of Druze theology, as we shall see, are paralleled by corresponding Christian dogmas. One of the founders of Druzism was a renegade Christian, and many of its early leading converts were tribes belonging to some one of the Oriental churches.

There is, after all, nothing mysterious in the "Asian mystery," and the "great enigma" does lend itself to solution.

Arabic-speaking Moslem might take a special pride in the peculiar relation of the Arabs to Islam, and in the dimly-remembered splendours of the early Caliphates, it is safe to say that normally he did not distinguish his being an Arab from his being a Moslem, and even when he did so it was the latter which was foremost in his thought and life.

3

For over a thousand years the majority of the population of Syria had been Moslem. There was not, however, complete unanimity in matters of religious belief. On the one hand, besides the Sunni or orthodox Moslems there were several heterodox Islamic and semi-Islamic sects: Shi'is, Druzes, Alawis and Isma'ilis. On the other hand, there still survived a number of Christian sects, Catholic, Greek Orthodox and others, which had come into existence in the early centuries of the Church's history; and there were in addition a comparatively small number of Jews.

Some of these communities were scattered throughout the country, while others possessed a local predominance in certain parts of it. Most of the districts held by these compact minorities were mountainous. The Lebanese mountains in particular were the homes of dissident communities, either because it was easier for the long-established inhabitants of Lebanon than for their neighbours of the plains to resist the pressure of Islamization, or else because sects which had grown up in the plains migrated to the mountains as an asylum where they would not be molested, or if attacked could better defend themselves. These mountain communities were marked by an especially unbending particularism and resistance to influences from outside.

4

Christians and Jews were left to carry on their own communal life without disturbance. For this there were two main reasons. The first was the Islamic doctrine in regard to Christianity and Judaism. Just as the Moslem regulated his life in accordance with the principles of his faith, so he did not deny a similar right to the Christians.

Moslems are not taught by their faith to regard Christians as inherently inferior, since it is in their power to become Moslems, and so enter the community of true believers in

S
795
L
795

Among the Moslem communities the main line of division is that between the Sunnis and the rest;

(i) The Sunni Moslems regard themselves as exponents of the original and unadulterated Islamic orthodoxy, as set forth not only in the Holy Book of Islam, but also in the Traditions of the Prophet and the system of theology and jurisprudence built up by the great Islamic thinkers. They constitute the vast majority of believers not only in the Levant States but in the Islamic world as a whole.

The other sects diverged from the main body of Islam at different times on account of political or theological dissension.

(ii) The Shi'is (known in Lebanon as the Metawila) split off in the seventh century A.D., with the struggle for the Caliphate between Muawiya and Ali, the Prophet's son-in-law. Even after the death of Ali they clung to his cause; their breach with the Sunnis was widened and made permanent by the Battle of Kerbela (681), in which Ali's son Husain was killed after the defeat of his army by that of the Umayyads. The Shi'is regard the succession to the Prophet as having passed, not to the orthodox line of Caliphs whom the Sunnis recognize, but to a hereditary line of Imams who were both the spiritual and the temporal heads of Islam, and of whom the first was Ali. The majority of Shi'is recognize twelve such Imams, the last of whom disappeared during the ninth century but will, it is believed, some day reappear. (the Mahdi)

(iii) The Isma'ilis split off from the majority of Shi'is during the eighth century, over the question of the succession to the Imamate. They recognize the first six only of the Shi'i Imams, and regard as the seventh and last of the Imams the brother of the seventh Imam of the Shi'i line. They introduced into Islam a number of esoteric doctrines, such as the ideas of successive emanations or incarnations of God, and of the transmigration of souls. These esoteric doctrines they regard as placed above human discussion and

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1 LEBANON MD1

dispensed by the Imam to a chosen body of initiates. They look upon the Imam as infallible, and his followers as therefore owing absolute obedience to him. For a time during the Middle Ages part of Syria was ruled by the 'orthodox' Isma'ili Caliphs of Egypt, the Fatimids, but on their decline a heterodox branch was formed as a political secret society, which under the name of the 'Assassins' terrorized a large part of the Islamic world. To-day they owe religious allegiance to the Aga Khan.

(iv) The Druze sect originated in the eleventh century, when some of the followers of the Fatimid Caliph Hakim, ruler of Egypt, put forward the claim that he was the last incarnation of the Deity. Forced to flee to Syria, they made converts among the adherents of Isma'ilism there, and in course of time those converts came to form a community distinct from the Isma'ilis. They preserved and in some ways developed the esoteric doctrines of Isma'ilism and the distinction between the initiates and the 'ignorant'. They are characterized by the cohesion of their social organization, the strength of their communal spirit and the rigour of their moral code.

(v) Finally, the Alawis, who are also known as the Nusairis, took over from Shi'ism and developed the cult of Ali, whom they regarded as an incarnation of God. From Isma'ilism they borrowed the idea of an esoteric teaching hidden from the masses; and their liturgy, the possession of which distinguishes them from other Islamic communities, seems to be largely Christian in origin. Their faith also contains elements derived from the pre-Christian worship of nature.

3

There are five important groups of Christian sects in the country:

(i) The so-called Greek Orthodox are members of the Eastern Orthodox Church which broke finally with the Western Church in the eleventh century. The two Churches differ on a number of doctrinal points,

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1 LEBANON ME

the most important of them that concerning the Procession of the Holy Ghost. There are also divergences in ceremonial and discipline; and the Eastern Church rejects the papal claim to universal supremacy. The Greek Orthodox in Syria and Lebanon are subject to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Antioch, who normally lives in Damascus. In the past the Patriarch and the upper hierarchy were Greek, while the lower clergy and the bulk of the laity were Arabs. In the course of the nineteenth century, however, the whole hierarchy became Arab, and Arabic is to-day the main liturgical language.

(ii) The Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites) and the Armenian Orthodox (Gregorians) both adhere to the Monophysite doctrine that Christ has only a Divine and not also a human nature: a doctrine which was condemned by the Council of Chalcedon (451). The Syrian Orthodox Church has a Syriac liturgy; the head of the hierarchy is also entitled Patriarch of Antioch and resides at Homs. The Gregorian Church has an Armenian liturgy, and stands at the very centre of the Armenian national tradition. Of its five Patriarchs, the Catholicos of Eshmiadzin in Armenia is the most exalted.

(iii) The Assyrians are the remnants of the Nestorian Church which originated with the Christological controversies of the fifth century. The Nestorians so overemphasized the distinction between the Logos and the man Jesus that there was a tendency to prejudice the conception of a real union between them. Their doctrine was condemned by the Council of Ephesus (431); subsequently, those who adhered to it formed themselves into an independent Church, which spread eastwards and sent missions as far as China. It was almost entirely destroyed by the Mongols in the fourteenth century. It has a distinctive Syriac liturgy; and its spiritual head is the Mar Shimun, formerly resident in Iraq but now in exile.

(iv) The Roman Catholics are mostly members of the

11: Hourani 5-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MDI LEB and ARI

Uniate Churches: that is, those Churches whose members formerly belonged to one or other of the non-Catholic Churches, and at some time in the past acknowledged the papal supremacy and gave up doctrines which the Roman Catholic Church regards as heretical, but retained their own liturgies and certain distinctive features of discipline and organization. There are five Uniate Churches with important bodies of adherents in Syria and Lebanon: the Greek Catholic, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic and Chaldaean Catholic Churches, which split off from the Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox and Nestorian Churches respectively; and the Maronite Church, which originally held the Monothelete doctrine that Christ has two Natures but one Will, and which returned to Rome finally and as a whole in the twelfth century. The Maronites, like the Syrian Orthodox and Assyrians, have a Syriac liturgy, and a Patriarch of Antioch, resident in Lebanon, as their spiritual head. There are comparatively few Roman Catholics of the Latin or Western rite.

(v) The Protestants are the fruits of the labours of American and other missionaries during the nineteenth and present centuries.

The Jews are mainly Arabic-speaking and long-settled in the country.

4

Of these religious communities, the Armenians (Orthodox and Catholic), the Assyrians and some of the Syrian Orthodox and Catholics are not Arabic-speaking and have, for the most part, come recently into the Levant States. The Armenians came originally from the Caucasus and have their own language and national traditions. Most of those now resident in Syria and Lebanon have entered the country during the last half-century, in consequence of the great massacres in Asia Minor (1895–1915), and more recently of the annexation of Alexandretta by Turkey.[1]

Most of the Assyrians have been settled in Iraq since the

[1] See Chapter XI.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1 LEBANON MD1

S 795 563 L 795 563 last war, when they were dislodged from their original homes in the Kurdish mountains; the Chaldaeans have lived in the Mosul area of Iraq for many centuries. In 1933 a period of tension between a section of the Assyrians and the Iraqi Government ended with the killing of some hundreds of them by Iraqi troops. Several thousands in consequence crossed the frontier into Syria, and although some of them later returned to Iraq, others were settled in the Jazirah with assistance from the League of Nations. Their settlement became an integral part of the Syrian State in 1942.

A large part of the Syrian Orthodox and Catholics still speak Syriac. They have been settled since before the coming of Islam in north Syria and south Turkey, in and around the Taurus hills, against which the wave of Arab influence exhausted itself. Thus they have been able to preserve their Syriac dialect which farther south has been replaced almost everywhere by Arabic. Many are, however, bilingual in Arabic and Syriac, and others have abandoned Syriac and are now Arabic-speaking.

S L [191]

S L 563 There are certain other groups which resemble the Armenians and Assyrians in not being Arabic-speaking, but unlike them are orthodox Moslems. The most important of them are:

(i) The Kurds, of whom there are perhaps 200,000.[1] They are mountaineers from the high country which links the Anatolian and Persian plateaux, and speak a dialect akin to Persian. Some of them have long been resident in the country, but others have emigrated in the last twenty years from their homes in the mountains of eastern Turkey, in order to escape the repressive measures of the Turkish Government. There are small numbers of Kurdish-speaking Yazidis, Alawis and Christians, but most of those who speak Kurdish as their native language are Sunnis.

(ii) The Turcomans, who number perhaps 30,000. They came originally from Central Asia, and their language is a dialect of Turkish. Originally nomads, they have now become semi-sedentary or wholly sedentary cultivators of the soil.

[1] These figures are only rough estimates; there are no official statistics for national and racial minorities.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MAI LEBANON ML1

(iii) The Circassians, who are by origin Moslems from the Caucasus. They fled from their homes after the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in the nineteenth century, and were settled by the Ottoman Government along the western edge of the Syrian Desert, to prevent the encroachments of the tribes. There are about 20,000 of them.

(iv) There are also a number of Yazidis, adherents of a secret dualistic religion and with a dialect of their own; but they are only a small offshoot of the main community in Iraq.

5

With these exceptions the minorities are Arabic-speaking and have lived in Syria and Lebanon for many generations; akin to the majority in many things, their basic difference is one of religious loyalties.

The general nature of the problem which they raise can be stated briefly. It is a product of two factors: first, of certain traditional differences which linger on in a new age; secondly, of the varying relations of the different elements in the population to the process of Westernization.

Serious at any time, religious differences were made more serious in the past by the prevalence of the theocratic view of life; differences of religious belief involved different political loyalties and principles of social conduct. The theocratic view was the basis of the 'millet-system', which, while it allowed a certain autonomy to the minorities, also increased the completeness of their separation from one another and from the majority. This was particularly true of those minorities of which a large proportion lived compactly in a single area; they came to regard themselves, if they had not always regarded themselves, as a 'peculiar people' linked by no moral or political tie with their neighbours. To complete their isolation there was added the memory of injustices, real or imagined, which they had suffered at the hands of the majority.

The persistence of these divergences in the present age adds a new and complicating factor to the problem of Westernization. It is not only that different communities have different paths to tread if they are to Westernize themselves: for example, the problems of social organization

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1
LEBANON ME1

among the Druzes of Jebel Druze are different from those among the Lebanese Christians. The growth of the Arab nationalist movement has also affected the problem of minorities. It is true that in principle Arab nationalism need not and indeed should not involve a problem of religious minorities. But there are several reasons why at the present day it does involve such a problem. The first reason is to be found in the immaturity of political thinking among the Arabs. Arabism, as the previous chapter made clear, has not yet determined its relationship with Islam; more generally, neither majority nor minorities have yet faced the problem of the connexion between religion and the State. Thus there is a tendency for many of the nationalists, although not their most thoughtful leaders, to regard members of the minorities as imperfect Arabs because they are heterodox Moslems or not Moslems at all; equally there is a tendency among the minorities to be suspicious of nationalism as a movement for unrestrained Sunni ascendancy. Among some of the Christian minorities there is a further tendency to regard the West as their spiritual home, to which they can belong in a way in which they could never belong to the Arabo-Islamic world to whose fringes they have so long clung.

The mutual suspicion has been increased in the last twenty-five years by the bad relations which have existed between the nationalists and the French authorities. In these years Arab nationalism has been largely a movement of opposition to France. Those whose nationalism is still coloured by religion draw from that an additional reason for suspecting the Christians as being of the same religion as the French. But quite apart from religious prejudice, suspicion has inevitably been aroused by the long-standing attachment of certain of the Christian communities to France. Many of the nationalists believe that this attachment has been used by her as an instrument in a policy of dividing, weakening and in other ways opposing the nationalist movement. Those of the minorities who have been used unwittingly in this way they regard as obstacles to the achievement of their aspirations; those who have lent themselves willingly to it they regard as traitors to the national cause.

Even when members of minorities become Arab nationalists, as many of them do, they often wear their nationalism with a difference. It is not only that they tend to emphasize

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MP 1

the smaller landowners resent the domination of the greater, the peasants are restive under their lords. A small but powerful class of educated young men is growing up which can no longer be satisfied either with the preservation of a closed and unchanging society or with Druzism as a system of belief. These social and intellectual processes are bound to alter the whole basis of the problem in the next generation or two.

10

The district of Latakia includes the mountain-range known as Jebel Ansariyah and the coastal plain at its foot. It is in some sense a natural unit, and the bulk of its population possesses a distinctive character. In 1938 its inhabitants numbered approximately 370,000, of whom 235,000, or roughly 60 per cent, were Alawis, 70,000, or about 20 per cent, Sunnis, 6,000 Isma'ilis, and most of the remainder Christians, mainly Greek Orthodox. In the town and immediate surroundings of Latakia itself, the Sunnis formed the largest single community.

The Alawis are the descendants of the indigenous inhabitants of the district, who have endured a number of conquerors but have managed to preserve their individuality under varying forms. For the greater part of the Ottoman period the district was virtually autonomous while acknowledging the suzerainty of the Sultan; but during the nineteenth century the control of the Ottoman authorities was greatly extended. Local autonomy in practice meant local tyranny by the feudal lords, who were to a large extent Sunnis. This is indeed one of the differences between the situation in Latakia and that in Jebel Druze: whereas in the latter the predominance of the Druzes is unchallenged, in the former the Alawis are in a majority but the Sunnis constitute a large proportion of the landowning class. Moreover both the Sunnis and the Christians are at a higher level of education and political consciousness than the Alawis, who are themselves sub-divided into sects and tribes and possess little communal consciousness.

Making allowances for local differences, what was said about the problem of the Druzes applies also to that of the Alawis. There are some, especially among French officials and missionaries, who believe that the first task is to raise

795 the standard of living and education among the Alawis and
648 to develop their corporate consciousness; and who believe that if this is to be done the Alawis must be given a separate administration specially adapted to their needs and under benevolent foreign tutelage. There are others who admit the importance of these tasks but who emphasize that it is equally necessary to give the Alawis a consciousness of being part of the Arab nation as an alternative to sectarianism and to a paralysing localism. Among the Alawis themselves, one party adheres to the former school of thought, a second to the latter, but the greater number are suspicious of all interference from outside and wish only to be left alone.

Here, as in Jebel Druze, great social and intellectual processes are beginning of which the results have yet to appear. But it will probably take longer to bring Alawi society to a point where it becomes possible to face the problem of its definitive political status.

II

311 The problem of the Jazirah, the north-eastern province
167 of Syria, is in many ways different from that of Jebel Druze and the Alawi territory. Before the War of 1914–1918 it was largely an empty district, except for Beduin tribes and some Kurdish villages. The land was sparsely cultivated where it was cultivated at all; life was insecure and government scarcely existed. When the French occupied Syria they established a considerable measure of public security, and this increased the attraction for settlers which the Jazirah already possessed by virtue of its fertility. The French authorities encouraged the settlement of members of Christian and other minorities who had been forced to leave their dwellings in Turkey, or who preferred not to live in the predominantly Moslem parts of Syria. In the last twenty years many thousands of Armenians, Jacobites and Syrian Catholics, together with Assyrians from Iraq after the events of 1933, have moved into the province; and even larger numbers of Kurdish Moslems, dislodged from their homes in Eastern Turkey by the policy of forcible assimilation
361 adopted by the Turkish Government. The new towns of
311 Hassetche and Qamishli and new villages have been created and new crops introduced, and the district has been opened up to regular commerce. The Beduin have been controlled
AND CERTAIN TRIBES AMONG THEM PERSUADED TO SETTLE ON THE LAND.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

formation of a Kurdish State which should unite the different parts of the Kurdish nation, now divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. In general, however, the Kurds are still too hostile to government as such for nationalism to have made much headway among them.

The different sections of the separatists do not seem to agree upon anything except their opposition to Syrian rule; for the population of the Jazirah possesses no such cohesion as the Druzes and Alawis. They are a collection of refugees, with something of the refugee mentality.

12

In the rest of Syria—that is to say, in the six provinces of Damascus, Homs, Hama, Aleppo, the Hauran and the Euphrates—there were at the end of 1938, according to official statistics, 352,000 members of religious minorities out of a total population of about 1,941,000, excluding the nomads. Approximately 250,000 were Christians, 91,000 heterodox Moslems and 24,000 Jews. Thus almost 20 per cent of the total population belonged to religious minorities, and of those 20 per cent roughly two-thirds were Christians. Most of the Christians are Arabic-speaking, with the exception of the Armenians. There must also be taken into account the several thousand Circassians, Turcomans and Kurds who are Sunni Moslems and therefore not members of religious minorities, but who constitute racial and linguistic minorities.

The members of religious minorities are most numerous in the provinces of Damascus and Aleppo, in each of which they number over 100,000, out of a total population of 530,000 in the former and 750,000 in the latter; but it is in the provinces of Homs and Hama that they form the largest proportion of the population (about 35 per cent). In the other two provinces—those of the Hauran and the Euphrates—there are comparatively few of them.

13

The differences between the Arabic-speaking Christians and the Moslems may be exaggerated. They share a language, many social customs and traditions; they are in some sense a single people. But while this is true and important, it must also be remembered that they differ from one another not only in religion but also in certain of their intellectual, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

social and economic characteristics. For example, the Christians accounted in 1938 for about 32 per cent of the total school population, and for an even larger proportion of pupils in the secondary schools. It is important to notice that 32 per cent of the Christian students attended schools controlled mainly by foreign Christian missions, 61 per cent attended private schools mostly maintained by religious communities, and only 7 per cent attended official schools.[1] Since the education given in the first two types of school is sectarian, Christians are receiving a different kind of education from Moslems, a far larger proportion of whom attend official institutions.

Educational differences are reinforced by social ones. The Christians still form a social unit, or rather a series of interconnected units, of which the relations with the Moslem community are peaceful and correct but not in normal circumstances cordial. This is especially true of the older people brought up under the Ottoman régime. The introduction of freer social customs from the West, the spread of education and the growth of the idea of nationalism are helping to make the young less conscious than their elders of their confessional loyalties, and may in the end succeed in breaking down the barriers between the sects and religions. Economically, also, the Christians tend to constitute a more predominantly urban community than the Moslems, with all the differences which that involves, but there is a Christian peasantry in certain parts of the country, similar in many ways to the Moslem peasantry.

In spite of incidents like those of 1860, on the whole the history of Syria has not been one of religious persecution on a large scale, and the Christians have enjoyed long periods of toleration, although not of equality with the Moslems. Such toleration has existed partly because of the long residence of Christians in the country, partly because they were not numerous enough to constitute a serious threat to Moslem supremacy, and partly because clergy and laity alike were for the most part Arabic in language and culture.

On the whole the growth of the nationalist movement has not had unfavourable consequences for the Christians. Individual Christians have played an important part in the movement in Syria as elsewhere. Nor is it merely isolated

[1] Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, *Rapport, 1938*, p. 91.

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

individuals who are sympathetic to Arab nationalism. Such sympathy is widespread among the Greek Orthodox. (One reason for this may be that since the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Greek Orthodox have had no external 'protector' and so have had to understand the necessity of being on good terms with their neighbours.) Nationalist ideas are particularly strong in the younger generation, who imbibe them in school and elsewhere. The Uniates tend to be less sympathetic, partly because they are less conscious and proud of their Arab traditions; partly because they are much influenced by French Catholic missionaries and teachers; and partly because of all sections of the population they have been the best treated by the French authorities, so that any relaxation of French control would mean the loss of their privileged position.

The leaders of the nationalist movement have always professed the best possible intentions towards the Christians, and have been quick to disown anything which might give the opposite impression. The periodical crises of national feeling have often been accompanied by scenes of Moslem-Christian fraternization. This attitude on the part of the leaders springs from a genuine desire to create a national unity which will transcend religious differences and make them less acute; and also from the wish not to alienate Western opinion. While, however, the more moderate and responsible nationalists are tolerant on principle and by sentiment, there is a certain suspicion of Christians among their less enlightened followers.

14

The Druzes and Alawis in the six provinces are outlying sections of the larger communities in Jebel Druze and the district of Latakia respectively, and do not require separate discussion here. The Isma'ilis form a compact community in the province of Hama; they keep much to themselves and want only to be left alone. The Circassians are to be found in the Hauran, on the northern frontier and on the Euphrates; they still constitute a separate entity with their own language and customs. During the Syrian revolt of 1925 they were used as irregulars by the French authorities, and this made them more unpopular with the Arabs than before. Some of them have at times demanded local autonomy, but

11: Hourani 3-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria MD1

courts', of which the personnel was partly French and only partly indigenous; this system replaced that of the 'capitulations' which had existed in the Ottoman Empire and of which the operation was suspended so long as the Mandate should continue.

8

The declarations of Syrian and Lebanese independence in 1941 have been gradually followed by a partial extension of self-government. Although the Mandate has not yet been formally extinguished, strict Mandatory control no longer exists. During the years from 1918 to 1941, during which France exercised this control, her efforts were attended with some success, but in general met with failure.

Briefly stated, the achievement of France was to bring into existence in Syria and Lebanon some of the essential conditions which would make possible the transition from a medieval to a modern society. Law and order were firmly established, even in backward regions where civil government existed scarcely or not at all in Turkish days. The improvements which were effected in the system of communications assisted this process. Good trunk-roads now link the main towns, and subsidiary roads have opened up the countryside to motor-traffic. These and other improvements have served not only to increase the efficiency of government but also to diminish local differences and prejudices.

The system of public finance was reduced to some sort of order. It was placed on a comparatively reasonable basis, although there are still serious flaws, as for example the regressive incidence of taxation. On the whole budgets balanced; and after the share of the French Mandated Territories in the Ottoman Debt was paid off in 1933 they had no public debt at all.

The improvements in public order and administration made possible an extension in the area of cultivation. The nomads were no longer allowed to raid the settled land, and were being gradually induced to become peasants. Some of the areas which they formerly dominated were thus opened up to agriculture; this was especially marked in the Syrian Jazirah.

For the first time for many centuries, the religious minorities were treated on a level of full equality with the Sunni Moslems in all official matters, judicial and administrative alike. (Some

11: Hourani S-4 (no date) 1946 MD1 Syria/MD/

of them indeed were better treated than the bulk of the population.) Special regard was paid to their needs and traditions, and opportunities were given for the development of their self-consciousness and self-respect. The effects of generations of inferiority cannot be wholly wiped out in the course of twenty years, but in those years Syria and Lebanon made a certain advance towards individual equality as the democratic countries of the West understand it.

Among the most urgent of the country's social problems is that of the archaic system of land-tenure. No direct assault, it is true, was made on the position of the great semi-feudal landowners. But the first step towards reform was taken by the establishment of a modern system of land-registration and the initiation of a land survey. Also the number of small freeholders was increased by the sale of public domain and the encouragement of the permanent partition of land held communally on the 'musha'' system.[1] In addition something was done to help foreign trade by the extension of harbour and other facilities.

A State system of schools was constructed almost from nothing; it is still very imperfect and not yet able to supply so good an education as is given by the best of the private schools, but at least it includes every grade of school, from primary up to the Syrian University in Damascus, an official institution set up in the early years of French Mandatory rule with the object of providing higher education in Arabic.

The foundations which have been laid are solid, but there is still much to be done before Syria and Lebanon possess even the framework of a modern society. Thus expenditure on public works and social services is still very small; the medical services are inadequate. No adequate census has been taken, although there has been a very elaborate and complete one in the neighbouring territory of Palestine. Labour legislation scarcely exists. Most serious gap of all, only inadequate measures to improve agricultural conditions have so far been adopted. Little provision has been made for agricultural education. Although excellent plans for irrigation have been drawn up, few of them were put into effect until the Allied occupation of 1941. The authorities had done little to provide facilities for agricultural credit, and nothing to encourage the formation of co-operative societies.

[1] See Chapter V.

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
SYRIA MEI
LEBANON MDI

chief towns of Syria and their populations are: Aleppo, 339,000 Damascus, the capital, 303,000; Hama, 134,000; Latakia, 90,000; Dair az-Zor, 65,000: of the Lebanon—Beirut, the capital, 247,000; Tripoli, 86,000; Sidon (Saida), 78,800; Zahle, 78,031. The population of each country is increasing by about 2 per cent a year. Between half a million and a million Syrians and Lebanese live abroad, mainly in the Americas and Africa; emigration continues; during 1952 about 100 Lebanese emigrated monthly, most of them to South America.

Religions

RELIGIOUS SECTS AND PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION

	Syria		Lebanon	
	Population in 1947	*Seats in 1947*	*Population in 1951*	*Seats in 1952*
Sunni	2,040,908	100	273,125	9
Shiis (incl. Alawis)	447,993	15	237,107	8
Druze	96,641	3	82,268	3
Maronite	14,133	1	377,544	13
Orthodox Greek	144,517	7	130,858	5
Orthodox Armenian	104,925	2	67,139	2
Orthodox Syrian (Jacobite)	43,081	2	4,562	
Catholic (Latin rite)	6,125		4,187	
Catholic (Greek rite)	49,543	2	81,764	3
Catholic (Syrian rite)	17,613	1	3,911	
Catholic (Armenian rite)	17,493	1	14,218	
Catholic (Chaldean rite)	4,991			
Protestants	11,959		12,641	
Nestorians	9,630			
Jews	30,873	1	5,993	
Others			6,684	
Minorities		3		1
TOTAL:	3,043,310	136	1,303,441[1]	44

The language of the great majority of Syrians and Lebanese is Arabic, and they think of themselves as Arabs. There are minorities of race, religion, and language:[1] the Kurds number between 100,000 and 200,000 and are mainly in northern Syria; most of them speak Kurdish but are progressively becoming less and less distinct from the Arabs. The Armenians, who live mainly in the three principal cities, now number about 140,000, although some 20,000 emigrated to Soviet Armenia in the 1940's. Most of them came as refugees from the Turks after the First World War. Other racial minorities are the Turkomans, Circassians, and Assyrians. Most of the religious sects

[1] For further details see A. H. Hourani, *Minorities in the Arab World* (London, Oxford University Press for RIIA, 1947).

3:Royal Institute of International Affairs U-4 (no date)1954 M1 Middle East
LEBANON MEI
SYRIA MDI

S L 142 795

shown in the table above are found in other parts of the Middle East but three indigenous sects need mention here: the Druzes, who are a mountain people professing a religion which derived from Islam in the eleventh century A.D., but became independent; the Alawis of the mountains behind Latakia, whose religion appears to be a dogmatic form of Shii Islam with some survivals of Christian ritual; and the Maronites, who are a Christian sect, living mainly in the north of Lebanon.

S L [643]

The religion of the majority of Syrians and of the head of the Syrian state is Sunni Islam; in the Lebanon, Muslims and Christians are fairly evenly divided and the President of the Republic is a Maronite Christian and the Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim. The Christians of the Arab Levant have provided the Middle East with great leaders in journalism, letters, politics, and science, but in present-day Syria the Christians are mainly prominent in commerce and industry. There is hardly any dangerous animosity between the sects, but sectarian bonds are a very real force in the lives of people who for so long lived under the Turkish *millet* system whereby each sect was an administrative unit, the head of which exercised considerable authority.

S L 142 262 291 177

So mixed a population living in a variety of environments naturally does not constitute one physical type, but some generalizations are hazarded for the sake of a fuller picture. Dark hair is almost universal but the skin of the town dweller is no darker than that of a Mediterranean European; the Syrians and Lebanese are not often as tall or as heavy as the average Englishman but they mature at an earlier age. The poorer nomad eats mainly bread, with milk and fruit and vegetables as less frequent additions and meat as an event, but in the towns and villages most people eat a full diet with rather more oil and spice than is used in Britain. The cultivator and the nomad wear local costumes but most townspeople wear European clothes; the tarbush or the head-cloth are usual but not universal headgear for men. Most Muslim women wear the veil, but in the towns the richer women are becoming more and more emancipated and, particularly in Beirut, many lead the same lives as Christian women. In Lebanon and in Damascus and Aleppo the way of life is very like that in southern Europe, and both countries make a pleasant home for a European.

History

S L 175

Semitic-speaking people have inhabited for four or five millennia the area which is known historically as Syria, and yet for much of this period the rulers of what is now Syria and

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
SYRIA MDI

873 K
795

a special course of two years would prepare full judges and *muftis*. Eight of the proposed fourteen classes were in existence in 1945–46. The Aleppo school follows the same program. At the end of the first and second courses a public examination is held for which the questions are set by the professors of the 2 schools at Aleppo and Damascus sitting together.

The Damascus school is run by a board composed of the *qadi* (a judge of the canon law of Islam) as chairman, the *mufti* of the Republic, the *naqib* (dean or registrar), the directors of Waqf of the Republic and of Damascus, two representatives of the Ministry of Education, and finally the director and the secretary of the school. Education is entirely free, including the board and lodging of the boarding students.

A sectarian Muslim school of a different kind is the Islamiyah College in Aleppo maintained by a society of Muslims who support the idea of a modern education but who also believe in a sound Islamic religious education. Its sponsors believe that the curriculum of the modern schools errs in giving too little attention to Muslim religious education and to Muslim character. At the same time it is felt that it is necessary "to counteract the effects of foreign schools." A group of citizens mostly connected with the Muslim Orphanage of Aleppo got together and solicited the help of a devout Aleppo lady who gave them the funds for erecting a large building for the school on the outskirts of the city in 1943. The school in 1945–46 had 238 boys enrolled in fifth primary through the sixth secondary. It had 30 boarding students of whom 8 were from the Orphanage and were given their education and living free after passing a competitive examination. The remainder came from the districts of Aleppo province and paid for their tuition, food, and lodging at the rate of £S700 (about $318.00). Tuition for day students ranges from £S50 to £S160 ($22.70 to $72.00) with full exemption for 10 boys and half-exemption for another 51 boys.

The curriculum of the government schools is followed with the addition of more hours for the study of the Koran, religion, and Muslim character. The school is supported by contributions from the public, by grants from the central government and the municipality of Aleppo, and by fees.

The Christian sectarian schools follow two main types—the Greek Orthodox and the Roman Catholic.

The Orthodox schools are exemplified by the Greek Orthodox school in Damascus which was visited by the American Council Commission. This school and 5 other schools in Damascus are conducted by the denominational council of the Greek Orthodox church—a council which has control

44cMatthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 Mi Middle East
SYRIA MDI

*873 795

of the property, the finances, and the philanthropic and educational activities of the church. A board of five men, all laymen, is chosen by the council to have charge of the schools. These 6 schools make a complete kindergarten, primary, and secondary ladder by themselves, consisting of 2 boys primary schools, 2 girls primary schools (1 of which is topped by an intermediate section), a coeducational primary school, and a complete secondary school for boys. Girls leaving the girls intermediate may join the secondary classes at the boys secondary school, and in 1945–46 there were 5 girls who had done this.

The schools are supported by fees, by income from the church endowment and property, by grants from the government, and by contributions. The buildings are owned by the Greek Orthodox church and community. The student body, though predominately Greek Orthodox, has students from other denominations. The boys secondary school, for example, has about 40 Muslims, 25 Jews, and 20 Catholics. The teaching staff of the school is also mixed: 16 Greek Orthodox, 5 Muslims, 2 Jews, and 3 Catholics. Fees are £S6 to £S90 in the primary schools and £S20 to £S200 in the secondary schools.

All pupils whose families receive help from the welfare society of the Greek Orthodox community are exempt from fees. Other pupils pay according to ability after inquiry by the priests and the committee.

In general, the curriculum follows that of the government, but with two important differences. French is begun in the first primary grade, and English in the first secondary grade. Arabic reading is begun toward the end of the first kindergarten year and continued in the second kindergarten year. By the time the children enter first grade, they know how to read. The first grade is, therefore, in reality equivalent to the second grade of the government schools; and, although the primary school is nominally five years, it is in actual fact six years. The first-grade children appear to be above the average age. This procedure may perhaps have been necessitated by the early teaching of French.

563 *873 [191]

The problem of teaching a multiplicity of languages in primary schools is found in an extreme form in Armenian schools. The largest Armenian community in Syria is in Aleppo where Armenians took refuge after the Armenian massacres in Turkey during the First World War. Anxious to preserve their national language and to know the language of the country of their adoption, they have had to teach both Arabic and Armenian. At the same time the advantages that accrued to those who knew French under the mandate made them introduce that language into their schools, while the fact that most Armenian youth who wanted to continue their

44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 Ml Middle East
SYRIA MDI

education preferred an American school forced them to teach English as well. 563 873*

This situation is well illustrated by the 2 Giligian primary schools in Aleppo—1 for boys and 1 for girls. Both are under the same principal. The boys school had in 1945–46 an attendance of 254 boys, while the girls school had 228 girls. The kindergarten department in connection with the latter had 240 boys and girls in four sections, one section of which had 72 children. Naturally, the teacher could do little more than watch over the children. In these schools Armenian is begun in the upper section of the kindergarten, Arabic in the first grade, English in the second grade, and French in the third. Previously, however, it was the practice to begin French in the first grade.

In order to provide for a program so heavily loaded with languages, each grade has an average of thirty-six to thirty-seven periods a week. The program also extends over six years instead of the usual five years of the public schools. The schools are housed in rented houses, and are supported mostly by fees ranging from £S30–£S60 a year. About 65 boys and girls are exempted. The government pays a grant of £S750 a year and the salary of one teacher which it supplies. The other teachers are graduates of American secondary schools, holders of the second *baccalauréat*, or women who have had some secondary studies. Two are from the Armenian secondary school in Istanbul, Turkey, while five men and women are graduates of the Armenian teachers college in Nicosia, Cyprus. This is an institution offering a course of three years above the secondary school for the education of teachers for Armenian schools.

While Orthodox schools are mostly controlled by laymen's councils of the community with the clergy in the background, the Catholic schools are controlled to a considerable extent and often directly by the clergy. The 3 Catholic private schools visited by the Commission in Syria were of this nature. A Catholic primary school in Aleppo was under the supervision of the Bishop of Aleppo and supported by him. The Maronite school for boys is headed by a priest and housed in a building belonging to the church. Its deficit is met by the Maronite welfare committee. A Maronite girls school in Latakia is conducted by the Maronite nuns of the Holy Family commonly known as the "nuns of 'Ibrin," a village in Lebanon where the mother convent is located. In all these schools French is stressed, except that the latter school by agreement with the government begins the teaching of French in the fourth grade. 795 ● 873*

The final type of private school is the nonsectarian school maintained either by groups and societies or by individuals. 873* 872*

63:Simmons et al G-6 (1941-1951) 1954
M1 Middle East
SYRIA MD1

POPULATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Population

The people of Syria are predominantly of ancient Semitic stock, modified by centuries of conquest, and Arabic in culture, language and religion. The population, however, includes numerous minority groups, some of which exist as compact communities with distinctive customs and traditions. The official method of enumeration is on the basis of religious affiliation. In 1949, the population was estimated at about 3,177,700, exclusive of undetermined numbers of Bedouin, representing less than 10 per cent of the total. Approximately 86 per cent of the inhabitants were adherents of Islam; about 69 per cent belonged to the Sunni sect. The heterodox sects consisted of roughly 355,500 Alawites, 100,600 Druses, 32,800 Ismaillites, 13,700 Shiites and 2,900 Yazides.

Syria, like Lebanon, has important indigenous Christian minorities, which together account for almost 14 per cent of the population. As of 1949, the Greek Orthodox Church claimed about 153,900 members; the Armenian Orthodox, 107,300; the Syrian Orthodox, 44,970; and the Greek Catholic, 51,500. Other church groups, comprising Armenian, Syrian and Roman Catholics, Maronites, Nestorians (Assyrians), Chaldeans and Protestants, each numbered from 5,000 to 18,000. In addition, there were slightly over 31,000 Jews, mainly of Sephardic origin and with a long history of residence in Syria. With the exception of about 125,300 Armenians and 10,200 Assyrians, the members of the Christian minorities are largely Arabic-speaking and closely related to their Moslem compatriots. Most of the Armenians have come to Syria since 1894 as refugees from Turkish territory. The majority reside in the larger towns, particularly in Damascus and Aleppo, but considerable numbers have settled in the Al Jazira region. The Assyrians who fled to Syria from Iraq in 1933 and the Chaldeans

p. 137(B)

162 167 dwell in the Khabour river basin. The Syrian Orthodox and Catholic churches flourish in the north, where the inhabitants of many [191] mountain villages employ Syriac dialects, preserved since pre-Islamic times.

● 715 Prominent among the Moslem minorities are the Alawites and the Druses. Although both are scattered throughout the country, they are found primarily in the provinces, which, under the Mandate, were semi-autonomous units of the Levant. The Alawites inhabit the province of Latakia, comprising the coastal plain and a large part of the Orontes river valley, where they represent about 70 per cent of the population. The Druses form a closely knit religious community which migrated to the Jebel ed Druz highlands from Lebanon in the last century.

162 Several racial and linguistic minority groups are contained in the orthodox Moslem majority. About 200,000 Kurds reside in Syria, chiefly in Aleppo and Al Jazira provinces and in the city of Damascus. A large proportion have lived for generations on the fringes of Kurdistan, within the pres- [161] ent boundaries of Syria, but some are recent colonists from eastern Turkey to the Al Jazira area, where they constitute a considerable part of the population. Smaller non-Arabic-speaking groups include about 30,000 Turkomans, settled around Aleppo and in the Orontes river valley, and almost 20,000 Circassians, found along the northern frontier and in the Euphrates river basin.

Over three quarters of the population live in the western and the northwestern provinces, with the greatest concentration in the coastal region, in the vicinity of Damascus and Aleppo, and in the Homs and the Hama areas. In the interior, the settled districts are limited to the river valleys, while the steppe and the desert country to the east and the south constitute 161 the home of nomadic Bedouin tribes. In 1948, the density of population in Latakia was estimated at 215 per square mile. In the province of Aleppo it was 113 per square mile; in the province of Damascus, 90 per